



Teachers' Reflections on Incorporating Islamic Moderation in English Language Teaching

Nurkasfi Samad¹, Sukirman^{1*}

¹Universitas Islam Negeri Alauddin Makassar, Indonesia

Correspondance email*: sukirman@uin-alauddin.ac.id

Abstract: *The increasing role of English as a global language presents challenges for Islamic educational institutions in balancing intercultural communication with the preservation of students' religious and moral values. This study explores English teachers' reflections on incorporating Islamic moderation (al-Wasatiyyah) into English Language Teaching (ELT) within Indonesian Islamic schools. Employing a qualitative multiple-case study design, data were collected through semi-structured interviews with eight English teachers from madrasahs and pesantren-based schools selected through purposive sampling. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings reveal that teachers perceive Islamic moderation as encompassing balance, tolerance, justice, openness, and peaceful coexistence, which serve as guiding principles for classroom practice. Rather than rejecting global cultural content, teachers adopted reflective pedagogical strategies by filtering, adapting, contextualizing, and critically discussing English learning materials to ensure their compatibility with Islamic ethical values while maintaining intercultural learning objectives. Reflective practice emerged as a key mechanism enabling teachers to negotiate tensions between global English and local religious identity. However, participants also identified challenges, including limited contextualized teaching materials, dominant Western cultural representations in textbooks, and insufficient institutional support. The study concludes that integrating Islamic moderation into ELT is not merely the addition of religious content but a continuous process of ethical reflection, intercultural negotiation, and pedagogical adaptation. These findings contribute to discussions on teacher cognition, culturally responsive pedagogy, and religious moderation while offering practical implications for curriculum development, teacher education, and policy in Islamic educational contexts.*

Keywords: *Islamic moderation (al-Wasatiyyah); English language teaching; teacher cognition; reflective practice; intercultural competence*

INTRODUCTION

English is a universal language that connects people from different countries, cultures, and beliefs because it functions as the main language for global interaction whether in formal or informal situations. Humans, as social beings, need to communicate because it is essential for society and the global community. While we all have different cultures and languages, English is the international language

that connects everyone, linking all nations around the world (Shenbagam, 2024). Furthermore, English is a key global tool for communication. It is important as a primary means to adapt and compete at the global level because it is widely used in various aspects of life, including education, economics, technology, diplomacy, and international communication (Zeng & Yang, 2024). Through learning English we can access more information, connect with people from different cultures and have greater opportunities in education and employment. In a global era, where the information spreads fast and countries work together more closely. English becomes a bridge that unites ideas and innovations across the world. When we are able to use English well, we can expand our perspective and participate more confidently in global discussions and developments.

English has become a priority in many countries, not only in Western or secular countries but also in Muslim majority countries such as Saudi Arabia, which since 2021 has implemented English instruction starting from the first grade of primary school to meet global challenges (Al-Seghayer, 2023). Similarly, in Malaysia, Egypt, and the United Arab Emirates, English is no longer just a subject but a strategic tool for the Fourth Industrial Revolution and international scientific discourse (Asmawi, 2022; Curle et al., 2022). These nations recognize that English language skills are important for participating discourse, developing scientific research, and establishing global collaboration. English learning is one of the most important subjects in the world. In this era of globalization, teaching English does not only teach language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing). It also serves as a crucial vehicle for the formation of social and cultural values. English as a ‘window to the world’ allows students to interact with diverse cultures and different perspectives.

Nowadays, almost every country incorporates English into its educational curriculum, establishing it not only as a tool for developing linguistic competence but also as a primary gateway for students to access global information and culture (Haryadi & Aminuddin, 2023). However, this global exposure inevitably carries cultural implications. Through English textbooks, media, and communicative practices, students frequently encounter Western ideologies and lifestyles that may differ from Islamic moral and spiritual values. Although learning English is highly beneficial, it often transmits cultural messages both explicit and implicit that may conflict with Islamic principles. Consequently, teachers face challenges in selecting appropriate materials or designing classroom discussions that encourage openness to global perspectives without compromising moral foundations. This challenge becomes even more critical because English learning is not only about language acquisition but also about shaping students’ intercultural understanding. Therefore, teachers must be able to balance global engagement with local values, one of which can be achieved through integrating Islamic moderation (*al-Wasatiyyah*) into English language teaching (Selim et al., 2025).

Several studies have emphasized this phenomenon. In Saudi Arabia, Alanazi (2024) found that English teachers experience tension between fostering global communication skills and maintaining Islamic moral education. Similarly, in Malaysia, Ahaya & Ong (2024) reported that some educators express concern over cultural dissonance embedded in English textbooks. In the Indonesian context,

Sofi and Jenks (2025) highlighted the importance of integrating local and religious values into English Language Teaching (ELT) to maintain cultural harmony and moral character. Beyond Southeast Asia, similar issues also arise in Pakistan, where Arshad et al. (2020) noted that teachers often modify English textbooks to align learning materials with Islamic and cultural principles. A comparable situation is observed in Turkey, where Bal (2025) reported concerns that globalized ELT materials could erode national cultural identity, prompting educators to seek a balanced pedagogical approach. In Indonesia, the Ministry of Religious Affairs (*Kemenag*) has reinforced the concept of Religious Moderation (*Moderasi Beragama*) as a national educational priority, emphasizing balance (*tawazun*), tolerance (*tasamuh*), fairness (*ta'adul*), and openness (*infitah*) as key values for developing inclusive and peace-oriented learners. Despite intensive efforts to encourage values based education studies that document teachers' personal reflections on integrating the values of Islamic Moderation (*al-Wasatiyyah*) into English language teaching remain relatively limited. Most of the existing literature still focuses on curriculum analysis, textbook evaluation, or policy frameworks (Astuti et al., 2024), which only describe what ought to be taught. Meanwhile, empirical case studies exploring how teachers translate the principles of balance (*tawassuth*), tolerance (*tasamuh*), and cultural accommodation into lesson planning, material selection, and classroom practices based on Islamic values are still scarce as seen in studies by (Alfian et al., 2021). This lack of reflective research limits our understanding of how the values of Islamic Moderation are manifested in concrete classroom actions, such as fair communication strategies, the selection of non-violent materials, and inclusive classroom management.

Therefore, this study aims to explore teachers' reflection on incorporating Islamic moderation values into English language teaching. Specifically, to understand how a teacher perceives, interprets, and applies the principles of *al-Wasatiyyah* including balance, tolerance, fairness, and openness, in lesson planning, classroom interaction, and material use. The research also aims to uncover the teacher's reasoning process and pedagogical strategies in harmonizing global engagement with Islamic ethical commitments. This research is expected to contribute both practically and academically. It can serve as a guide for English teachers in Muslim-majority in integrating Islamic values meaningfully into a communicative and interculturally oriented teaching framework. This research is also a reference for policy makers, curriculum developers, and teacher-training institutions in formulating professional development programs that support the application of religious moderation in English Learning Teaching.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This Theoretical Framework becomes the conceptual foundation for research that aims to explore teachers' reflection on integrating the value of Islamic Moderation (*Al-Wasatiyyah*) into English Language Teaching. This research is based on the theory of teacher reflection and the concept of Islamic Moderation.

Teacher Reflection Theory

Teacher reflection is a critical process in which teachers thoughtfully examine their teaching experiences to improve their professional practice by connecting theory with what happens in the classroom (Miulescu & Tacea, 2023). Through reflection, teachers become more aware of their beliefs, values, and learning decisions, especially when working in culturally and religiously sensitive contexts. In English Language Teaching, reflective practice helps teachers evaluate whether learning materials, classroom activities, and teaching strategies are in line with global communication goals while still respecting local cultural and religious values. Reflection also enables teachers to respond wisely to challenges or tensions that may arise from the use of global English materials (Masharipova, 2025).

The concept of teacher reflection was introduced by Donald A. Schön in *The Reflective Practitioner* (1983), where reflection is seen as a way for teachers to deal with complex and where reflection is seen as a way for teachers to deal with complex and uncertain classroom situations through reflection-in-action (during teaching) and reflection-on-action (after teaching). This idea moved teaching away from purely technical approaches toward a more experience-based understanding of professional practice in uncertain classroom situations through reflection-in-action (during teaching) and reflection-on-action (after teaching). The theory was later developed by scholars such as Dang et al. (2025) placing reflection in context of language teacher education. He emphasizes that teacher reflection involves examining teachers' beliefs, identity, emotions, and contextual factors that influence pedagogical decision-making. Meanwhile, Masharipova (2025) highlights the role of teacher cognition, arguing that teachers' beliefs and reflections strongly shape classroom practices, particularly in second and foreign language teaching contexts.

The Concept of Islamic Moderation (Al-Wasatiyyah)

The concept of Islamic moderation (*al-Wasatiyyah*) originates from the Qur'anic principle of *ummatan wasatan* (Qur'an 2:143), which refers to a just, balanced, and moderate community. This concept was later developed by contemporary Islamic scholars, particularly Mohammad Hashim Kamali (2015), who defined *al-Wasatiyyah* as an ethical framework based on the values of balance, justice, tolerance, and openness. Historically, *al-Wasatiyyah* emerged as a response to extreme interpretations of religion by promoting a middle path that harmonizes religious commitment with changing social realities (Mohammed & Kamali, n.d.). In modern Muslim-majority societies, this principle has been widely applied in various domains, including governance, interfaith relations, and education. In Indonesia, *al-Wasatiyyah* has been institutionally embedded through the national policy of Religious Moderation (*Moderasi Beragama*) promoted by the Ministry of Religious Affairs, which emphasizes core values such as balance (*tawazun*), tolerance (*tasamuh*), justice (*ta'adul*), and openness (*infithah*) as guiding principles in educational practice (Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2019).

In the context of ELT, Islamic moderation (*Al-Wasatiyyah*) functions as a pedagogical filter and an ethical framework that bridges the gap between global linguistic competence and local moral identity. This integration is not just inserting

religious terminology into lesson materials but rather, it is a discussion process where teachers mediate ELT content which is often conditioned on Western values in order to remain in line with the principles of Islamic moderation. According to Najih et al. (2024), moderate Islamic education in the global era must be able to carry out positive hybridization taking advantage of global knowledge (English) without losing the foundation of spirituality and ethics. For instance:

1. The principle of *tawazun* (balance) is applied by balancing authentic western texts with Islamic moral discourse.
2. *Tasamuh* (tolerance) is realized through the selection of cross-cultural topics that encourage empathy without necessarily endorsing values that contradict Sharia.
3. *Ta'adul* (justice/equity) is reflected in a teacher's objectivity when analyzing global issues.
4. *Infitah* (openness) Manifested as an intellectual readiness to interact with modern ideas, science and global perspectives in English language Teaching. The infitah concept encourages students to become critical and open learners. Students can adopt beneficial innovations from the outside world, but still filter them strongly based on Islamic ethics. It transforms English from threatening foreign influence into a strategic tool for global contribution.

Recent studies suggest that such pedagogical mediation enables students to engage confidently in global communication while maintaining their Islamic cultural and moral identities (Farah et al., 2025).

RESEARCH METHOD

This research used a qualitative research approach using a multiple-case study design to explore teachers' reflections on incorporating the values of Islamic moderation (*Al Wasatiyah*) into ELT. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because the study aimed to obtain an in-depth and comprehensive understanding of teachers' experiences, perceptions, interpretations, personal reflections, and pedagogical practices regarding the integration of Islamic moderation values in classroom learning. Qualitative research enables researchers to explore meanings, experiences, and perspectives that cannot be adequately captured through numerical data (Creswell:2014). According to Creswell (2014), case study is a design of inquiry commonly used in many fields, particularly evaluation, in which the researcher develops an in-depth analysis of a case, such as a program, event, activity, process, or one or more individuals. Cases are bounded by time and activity, and researchers collect detailed information using various data collection procedures over a sustained period of time. Furthermore, the case study design allowed the researcher to conduct a detailed and contextualized examination of a specific educational setting and participant. This design was selected because the study focused on a bounded system, namely an English teacher working in an Islamic educational institution who actively integrated Islamic moderation values into ELT practices.

The participants in this study were selected using a purposive sampling technique, which is commonly employed in qualitative research to obtain

information-rich participants who possess relevant experience and expertise related to the phenomenon under investigation (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The participants consisted of eight English teachers working in Islamic educational institutions, including madrasahs and pesantren-based schools. They had teaching experiences ranging from two to eighteen years, and most had participated in educational or professional training programs on Religious Moderation organized by the Ministry of Religious Affairs. In addition, the participants were actively involved in adapting English teaching materials and classroom practices to align with Islamic and local cultural values.

Table 1. *Participants' Professional Background*

Participants	Institution Type	Teaching Experience	Moderation Training	Educational Background
P1	Islamic Senior High School	18 years	Yes	English Education
P2	Islamic Junior High School	15 years	Yes	English Education
P3	Islamic Junior High School	7 years	Yes	English Education
P4	Pesantren-based School	18 years	No	English Education
P5	Pesantren-based School	5 years	Yes	English Education
P6	Islamic Senior High School	5 years	Yes	English Education
P7	Islamic Senior High School	2 years	No	English Education
P8	Islamic Senior High School	2 years	Yes	English Education

As presented in Table 1, the participants involved in this research had diverse teaching experiences ranging from two to eighteen years. Most participants had previously attended training programs on religious moderation, while two participants had no formal training experience in this area. The diversity of participants' professional backgrounds provided rich insights into teachers' reflections and pedagogical practices regarding the integration of Islamic moderation values into ELT contexts. Islamic educational institutions were intentionally selected as the research context because ELT materials in such settings frequently involve interactions between global cultural influences and Islamic moral principles. Consequently, teachers working within these institutions often engage in reflective pedagogical decision-making when selecting, modifying, and contextualizing English learning materials. Their reflections, instructional judgments, and classroom practices were therefore considered valuable for understanding how the principles of Islamic moderation are interpreted, negotiated, and implemented within ELT practices.

Data for this study were primarily collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews to explore the teachers' reflections, beliefs, pedagogical

reasoning, and teaching experiences related to the integration of Islamic moderation values into ELT. Semi-structured interviews were selected because they provide flexibility for participants to express their experiences, perspectives, and interpretations in greater depth while still allowing the researcher to focus on specific research themes. Recent methodological studies emphasize that semi-structured interviews are effective for generating rich and meaningful qualitative data because they enable probing, clarification, and deeper exploration of participants' lived experiences (Mcintosh & Morse, 2015). The interview questions in this study focused on the teacher's understanding of *al-Wasatiyyah*, strategies for selecting and adapting teaching materials, and reflections on balancing global English content with Islamic ethical values. This method enabled the researcher to gain deeper insights into the teacher's cognitive and reflective processes in integrating Islamic moderation principles into classroom practices.

The interviews were conducted between approximately 30-60 minutes depending on the depth of participants' responses and discussions. To facilitate participants in expressing their ideas naturally and comfortably, the interviews were conducted bilingually using both Bahasa Indonesia and English. The use of bilingual interviews was considered important because some participants preferred to explain culturally sensitive issues, pedagogical experiences, and religious perspectives in Bahasa Indonesia, while others used English expressions related to ELT practices and professional terminology. All interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent and subsequently transcribed verbatim to preserve the authenticity and accuracy of the data. Responses delivered in Bahasa Indonesia were translated carefully into English while maintaining the original meanings, contextual nuances, and participants' intended perspectives. The verbatim transcription process enabled the researcher to capture detailed expressions, reflections, and recurring ideas related to the implementation of Islamic moderation values within ELT classrooms.

The data in this study were analyzed using thematic analysis, a method widely used in qualitative research to identify, analyze, and interpret patterns of meaning within the data. According to Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke (2022), thematic analysis provides a flexible and systematic approach for exploring participants' experiences, perspectives, and interpretations. The analysis process began with repeatedly reading the interview transcripts to develop familiarity and deeper understanding of the data. This step is consistent with the initial phase of thematic analysis described by Naeem et al. (2024), which emphasizes familiarization with the data as an essential foundation for generating meaningful interpretations. After that, the researcher generated initial codes by identifying significant statements, recurring ideas, and meaningful patterns related to teachers' reflections and the integration of Islamic moderation values in ELT. The identified codes were then grouped into broader categories and themes representing the major findings of the study. Furthermore, the themes were continuously reviewed, refined, and interpreted to ensure their relevance and consistency with the research objectives. To maintain the trustworthiness and credibility of the findings, the researcher applied careful documentation throughout the analytical process and conducted repeated checks on the coding and theme development to ensure consistency and accuracy of

interpretation. This systematic analytical process is also in line with Naeem et al. (2024), who emphasize that a transparent and well-documented thematic analysis strengthens the rigor and credibility of qualitative research.

To maintain the trustworthiness and credibility of the findings, several strategies were employed throughout the research process. Member checking was conducted by asking several participants to review interview summaries and interpretations to confirm the accuracy of the data. In addition, peer debriefing was carried out through discussions with academic colleagues to minimize researcher bias during coding and interpretation. The researcher also maintained reflective notes and careful documentation throughout the analytical process to ensure transparency, consistency, and credibility in theme development and data interpretation. Then, ethical considerations were carefully maintained throughout the research process to protect the rights, privacy, and well-being of the participants. Prior to the interviews, the researcher clearly explained the objectives of the study, the research procedures, and the voluntary nature of participation. Eight participants voluntarily agreed to take part in the study and gave their consent to be interviewed. They were also informed that they could withdraw from the research at any time without facing any consequences. To ensure confidentiality and anonymity, the identities of the participants were strictly protected. Personal information, including participants' names and institutional identities, was not disclosed in the study. Instead, codes such as P1, P2, and P3 were used to represent participants in the findings and discussion sections. Furthermore, all collected data were securely stored and used exclusively for academic and research purposes. The researcher also ensured that participants' responses were presented accurately, respectfully, and without any form of data manipulation or misrepresentation.

FINDINGS

This section presents the findings of the study regarding teachers' reflections on incorporating Islamic moderation values into ELT. The findings were derived from semi-structured interviews with English teachers working in Islamic educational institutions. The analysis identified five major themes related to teachers' understanding of Islamic moderation, the integration of moderation values into ELT materials and classroom practices, teachers' reflective processes, and the challenges encountered in implementing Islamic moderation in English learning contexts.

Teachers' Educational Background and Understanding of Islamic Moderation

The findings indicated that the majority of participants had participated in training programs related to religious moderation, whereas only two participants stated that they had never participated in such programs. Overall, participants generally understood Islamic moderation as balance, tolerance, fairness, peacefulness, and the avoidance of extremism. This understanding was reflected in several participants' statements, such as:

“Practicing religion in a balanced way, avoiding extremism, and respecting other religions” (P1)

“Following the middle path and avoiding extreme views” (P3)

“Practicing religion in a balanced, tolerant, and peaceful way” (P8)

Furthermore, all participants believed that integrating Islamic moderation into ELT was important, particularly to support students' character development and strengthen their Islamic identity. Participants emphasized that English learning should not only focus on linguistic competence but also promote moral and social values. As stated by several participants, integrating Islamic moderation was:

“important to develop tolerant and moderate students” (P3),

“important because language learning also shapes character” (P4),

“important to help students engage with global culture without losing Islamic values” (P8).

In relation to the connection between English and Islamic values, most participants acknowledged the existence of potential tensions arising from Western cultural influences commonly embedded in English learning materials. However, participants expressed varying perspectives regarding this issue. Some participants believed that English itself is a neutral communication tool and that the challenge mainly lies in the presentation of cultural content. For instance, one participant stated, *“No tension; English is only a communication tool” (P1)*, while another mentioned that *“Some tension exists due to Western cultural influences” (P3)*. Similarly, another participant emphasized that *“Potential tension comes from cultural values, not the language itself” (P6)*.

The Integration of Islamic Moderation in ELT Materials

The findings indicated that participants carefully selected English teaching materials by taking into account students' needs, learning objectives, and the compatibility of the materials with Islamic values. Teachers emphasized that English learning materials should contain positive moral and educational values that align with the Islamic identity of the institution. For example, one participant stated that *“I usually select materials that match the Islamic character of the madrasah” (P2)*, while another participant explained that the materials were selected by *“ensuring the content contains positive values” (P3)*. In addition, some participants preferred to design their own materials based on the government curriculum in order to better integrate Islamic principles into classroom instruction. As expressed by one teacher, *“I usually create my own teaching materials based on the government syllabus” (P5)*.

The findings further showed that participants frequently encountered culturally sensitive content in English teaching materials that was considered inconsistent with Islamic teachings and local cultural norms. Several participants identified topics and visual representations commonly found in English textbooks that potentially conflicted with students' religious values. One participant mentioned, *“I once found materials discussing the topic of ‘dating’” (P3)*, while another participant referred to *“pictures of women wearing revealing clothing” (P4)*. Similarly, another teacher highlighted content related to *“free dating, alcohol*

or parties, and revealing styles of clothing" (P8). These findings suggest that teachers were aware of the cultural and ethical challenges embedded in some English learning resources.

To overcome these issues, participants implemented various strategies by adapting and contextualizing the learning materials to make them more suitable for students' religious and cultural backgrounds. Teachers modified certain terms, adjusted learning contexts, and connected the materials with Islamic history and local cultural practices. For instance, one participant explained, *"I replace it with 'friend' or 'family'"* (P3), while another participant stated, *"I usually relate it to the history of the Ka'bah"* (P2). Another teacher also mentioned, *"I contextualize it into a family gathering or a community celebration"* (P7). These practices demonstrate teachers' efforts to create culturally appropriate English learning experiences while maintaining students' engagement in the learning process.

Moreover, participants emphasized the importance of maintaining a balance between exposure to global English materials and the preservation of Islamic ethical values. Rather than completely rejecting foreign cultural content, teachers believed that such materials should be carefully filtered, explained, and guided within appropriate educational contexts. One participant stated that *"the materials are filtered to ensure they do not conflict with Islamic values"* (P2), while another explained that *"the teacher plays an important role in filtering, explaining, and guiding students"* (P3). Likewise, one participant emphasized that *"the main principle is not to reject foreign materials completely"* (P6). These findings indicate that participants perceived English language learning as a medium for developing intercultural understanding while simultaneously preserving students' religious and cultural identities.

The Practice of Islamic Moderation Values in Classroom Teaching

The findings indicated that participants implemented Islamic moderation values through balanced instructional practices, respectful classroom communication, equal participation, and open discussion. Teachers combined English language instruction with character education and encouraged students to think critically while appreciating diverse perspectives. In implementing balanced teaching practices, participants highlighted the importance of harmonizing language skill development with students' moral and character formation. One participant stated, *"I apply the principle of balance by maintaining harmony between language skill development and character building"* (P2). Similarly, another participant explained, *"While teaching grammar and vocabulary, I also teach students how to speak politely and respect others"* (P3). These findings suggest that teachers perceived English learning not solely as linguistic instruction but also as a means of nurturing students' ethical and social awareness.

The findings also indicated that participants encouraged respectful interaction and equal participation throughout classroom activities.. Teachers encouraged students to share their opinions freely while maintaining respect for differing perspectives. One participant explained, *"I respect their opinions by not immediately saying that their answers are wrong"* (P1), whereas another participant emphasized that *"differences of opinion are natural in the learning process"* (P2). Participants also attempted to ensure that all students had equal opportunities to

participate in classroom discussions. As stated by one participant, *"Every student in the discussion has an equal opportunity to participate and express their opinions"* (P1). Likewise, another participant mentioned that *"no student should dominate the class, and no student should feel ignored or silenced"* (P6). These findings indicate that teachers attempted to establish inclusive classroom environments that reflected the principles of fairness, tolerance, and mutual respect.

Moreover, participants encouraged students to develop critical and open-minded perspectives throughout the learning process. Teachers attempted to present multiple viewpoints and guide students in understanding global issues without neglecting Islamic ethical principles. One participant stated, *"I try to explain topics using different sources and perspectives"* (P3). Similarly, another participant explained, *"I encourage students to explore ideas critically so they can understand the world without losing their moral direction"* (P6). These practices indicate that participants viewed critical thinking and intercultural understanding as important components of English language learning that should remain aligned with the values of Islamic moderation.

Teachers' Reflections on Their Teaching Practice

The findings indicated that participants regularly conducted reflective practices to evaluate whether their teaching aligned with the principles of Islamic moderation. Teachers commonly reflected on students' attitudes, classroom interaction, learning outcomes, and the extent to which Islamic values were integrated throughout the teaching and learning process. Reflection was viewed as an important way to assess not only students' academic achievement but also the development of respectful behavior, tolerance, and positive character in the classroom. One participant explained, *"I evaluate it by observing students' attitudes and behavior toward others"* (P1). Similarly, another participant stated that *"reflection helps me ensure that the learning objectives and values taught during the lesson have been achieved"* (P3). In addition, one participant mentioned that teaching evaluation was conducted by referring to moderation indicators such as *tasamuh* (tolerance) and *tawassuth* (moderation) (P5). These findings suggest that reflective practice played an important role in helping teachers maintain the integration of Islamic moderation values within English language learning.

The findings also revealed that participants experienced several dilemmas when teaching English materials containing Western cultural content that was perceived as less compatible with Islamic teachings and local cultural norms. Some teachers encountered situations in which the learning materials included topics or examples that created ethical and cultural concerns in the classroom. One participant explained, *"I have experienced dilemmas when English materials contained aspects of Western culture that were less aligned with Islamic values"* (P2). Another participant shared a specific experience, stating, *"I once experienced a dilemma when teaching if clauses using a song that contained descriptions of worship practices from another religion"* (P5). Similarly, another participant noted that *"these dilemmas usually arise when certain materials conflict with Islamic teachings or local cultural norms"* (P6).

To manage these challenges, participants applied various strategies aimed at maintaining educational objectives while ensuring alignment with Islamic values.

Teachers emphasized the importance of guiding students critically and openly when discussing cultural differences presented in English learning materials. One participant explained, *“I respond by being honest about the cultural differences and facilitating a discussion on how we, as Muslims, should view such topics”* (P7). Another participant stated, *“I try to respond wisely by adapting the materials and guiding discussions in a way that remains educational while still aligning with Islamic values”* (P8). These findings indicate that teachers attempted to balance intercultural understanding with the preservation of students’ religious and moral identities through reflective and context-sensitive teaching practices.

Challenges, Strategies, and Curriculum Improvement

The findings indicated that participants experienced various obstacles in integrating Islamic moderation values into ELT. These challenges were primarily associated with the limited availability of teaching resources that explicitly incorporate religious moderation values, the strong presence of Western cultural perspectives in English learning materials, and the challenge of maintaining a balance between global content and Islamic principles. One participant mentioned the *“limited availability of teaching materials that directly incorporate the values of religious moderation”* (P2), while another participant noted that *“many English textbooks still strongly reflect Western culture”* (P6). These findings suggest that teachers faced difficulties in identifying learning materials that were both pedagogically appropriate and consistent with Islamic values.

To respond to these challenges, participants applied several strategies to adapt learning materials and manage cultural content more carefully. Teachers emphasized the importance of contextualizing instructional materials and selectively filtering foreign cultural elements to ensure their relevance to Islamic teachings and local cultural contexts. One participant explained that *“the most effective strategy is contextualizing the materials”* (P2), whereas another participant stated that *“global content used in learning should be carefully filtered, adjusted, and directed”* (P3). Similarly, one participant introduced what was described as the “Filter and Transform” strategy to modify learning materials while maintaining their educational value and alignment with Islamic ethics (P6). These practices demonstrate teachers’ efforts to develop students’ intercultural understanding without neglecting their moral and religious identities.

Moreover, participants proposed several recommendations for improving curriculum development and strengthening teacher support in integrating Islamic moderation into ELT. Teachers highlighted the importance of professional training programs, workshops, and integrated teaching resources that combine English language learning with Islamic and local cultural values. One participant recommended the provision of *“training or workshops on integrating religious moderation values into the teaching process”* (P2), while another participant emphasized the need for *“integrated textbooks and teaching modules that combine English learning with Islamic and local cultural values”* (P6). In addition, one participant stated, *“I would make Islamic moderation a core part of English language learning”* (P3). These findings indicate that participants considered curriculum improvement and institutional support as important factors in enhancing

the implementation of Islamic moderation values in English language teaching practices.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that the integration of Islamic moderation values into English Language Teaching involves more than simply incorporating religious messages into English instruction. Instead, it represents a dynamic pedagogical process shaped by cultural, ethical, and ideological considerations. Participants generally interpreted Islamic moderation as values promoting balance, tolerance, fairness, openness, peaceful coexistence, and opposition to extremism. These principles were viewed as essential foundations for fostering respectful classroom interaction and strengthening students' moral awareness within multicultural educational settings, which is consistent with the findings of Mukhibat et al., (2024), who emphasized that religious moderation promotes cultural openness and harmonious educational environments. Furthermore, these findings support the argument of Setiawan and Maryam (2024) that integrating religious moderation into educational practices extends beyond religious instruction and functions as a pedagogical framework. The findings further reinforce the argument that Islamic moderation serves not merely as a religious discourse but also as a pedagogical framework for cultivating inclusive attitudes and ethical engagement in contemporary education.

The study also identified that teachers perceived English not only as a communication tool but also as a language embedded with cultural values, ideologies, and social meanings. While some participants regarded English as culturally neutral, others identified tensions arising from the dominance of Western-oriented cultural representations in English learning materials. These differing perspectives indicate that teachers continuously negotiated between global linguistic exposure and local Islamic identity during classroom practice. Similar concerns have been identified in studies examining the interaction between Western cultural influences and Islamic principles within English education in Islamic institutions (Farah et al., 2025). At the same time, the findings reflect the increasingly important role of English as a global lingua franca that enables international communication while simultaneously transmitting cultural perspectives and ideological assumptions (Arfa-kaboodvand & Akbarova, 2025). In this context, teachers functioned not merely as language instructors but also as cultural mediators responsible for interpreting and adapting global cultural content according to local religious and moral expectations. This finding reflects broader discussions in English Language Teaching that recognize the inseparable relationship between language, culture, identity, and ideology within globalized educational contexts (Çelik & Yazan, 2023).

Furthermore, the findings indicate that participants did not entirely reject the culturally sensitive content described above. Instead, teachers selectively filtered, adapted, contextualized, and reinterpreted such materials so they remained compatible with Islamic ethical principles (Hasibuan et al., 2025). These practices suggest that teachers adopted a moderate and dialogic pedagogical orientation rather than a rigid rejection of global culture. Such approaches reflect the principles of *al-Wasatiyyah*, which emphasize balance, openness, fairness, and contextual

understanding when engaging with sociocultural diversity (Mubin et al., 2024). Similar patterns have been highlighted in studies discussing culturally responsive and value-oriented pedagogical practices in Islamic educational contexts, particularly those emphasizing the adaptation of English teaching materials to local religious and cultural values (Mulyati & Kultsum, 2023).

However, the findings also emphasize significant pedagogical tensions within this integration process. Although filtering and contextualizing foreign cultural materials may help maintain students' moral identity and ethical awareness, excessive adaptation may simultaneously limit opportunities for students to develop deeper intercultural competence and authentic engagement with global diversity (Yenuri, 2025). Teachers therefore occupied a highly complex pedagogical position in which they needed to determine which aspects of global culture should be maintained, negotiated, or transformed (Megasih & Nurkamto, 2025). This tension indicates that integrating Islamic moderation into ELT is not merely a technical instructional strategy but rather an ongoing ethical decision-making process requiring contextual sensitivity, intercultural awareness, and professional judgment (Umar et al., 2024). These findings challenge the common assumption that Islamic educational institutions simply oppose Western-oriented English education. Instead, they indicate that teachers' pedagogical beliefs support a more nuanced interpretation and adaptation of English language teaching within Islamic educational contexts (Ilyas & Tarmini, 2025). Instead, the study suggests that teachers attempted to construct a negotiated educational environment in which students could engage critically with global knowledge while preserving Islamic moral values (Umar et al., 2024). Similar arguments regarding intercultural negotiation, curriculum adaptation, and the balance between global competence and local identity have been discussed in recent ELT scholarship (Natasya et al., 2025).

Reflective practice in this study extended beyond professional evaluation and became a form of ethical and intercultural reflection. Participants continuously considered how English learning could remain communicative, globally oriented, and culturally appropriate at the same time. Teachers reflected on how students interpreted foreign cultural content, how classroom discussions influenced students' attitudes, and whether learning activities successfully balanced intercultural openness with Islamic ethical commitments. This finding extends Schön's (1983) conception of the reflective practitioner by demonstrating that reflective practice in Islamic ELT contexts also involves ongoing negotiation between global communication demands and local religious identity. This finding is consistent with Farah et al. (2025), who reported that English teachers in an international Islamic boarding school continuously negotiated Western cultural content with Islamic values, adapting their pedagogical practices to align with the school's religious vision while preparing students for global communication. Similarly, the participants in this study engaged in continuous reflection to ensure that English language teaching promoted intercultural understanding without compromising Islamic ethical principles. Furthermore, systematic reflection enabled teachers to refine their instructional practices and respond more effectively to the complexities of intercultural language education.

At the classroom level, Islamic moderation values were reflected not only through learning materials but also through communicative and interactional practices. Teachers promoted politeness, empathy, mutual respect, inclusivity, and ethical communication alongside linguistic competence. Participants also attempted to establish democratic classroom environments in which students were encouraged to express opinions openly while respecting differing perspectives. Such practices reflect the principles of *tasamuh* (tolerance) and *ta'adul* (justice), which represent central components of Islamic moderation (Subchi et al., 2022). Previous studies likewise argue that moderation-oriented education contributes to the development of intercultural awareness, responsible citizenship, inclusive participation, and social harmony among students (Mukhibat et al., 2024). However, the present study further demonstrates that these values were not taught abstractly but embedded directly into classroom interaction and everyday communicative practices, allowing students to experience moderation as a lived educational practice rather than merely a conceptual ideal.

The findings additionally reveal several structural and institutional challenges affecting the implementation of Islamic moderation within ELT. Participants explained that contextualized teaching materials integrating Islamic moderation values remain limited, while many commercially produced English textbooks continue to reflect dominant Western sociocultural perspectives without sufficient adaptation to local religious contexts. Similar concerns have been identified in previous studies discussing the limited integration of Islamic values within globally oriented ELT materials and the need for culturally responsive curriculum development (Toledo-Sandoval, 2020). Consequently, teachers were often required to independently adapt learning materials and develop contextual strategies without adequate institutional guidance or professional support. This condition placed considerable responsibility on individual teachers because the success of value integration largely depended on their personal beliefs, intercultural competence, reflective awareness, and pedagogical creativity.

Another important issue emerging from the findings concerns the paradoxical expectations placed upon teachers in Islamic educational institutions. On the one hand, teachers are expected to equip students with global communication skills, intercultural competence, and the ability to participate in international contexts through English learning. On the other hand, they are simultaneously expected to preserve students' Islamic moral identity and protect them from cultural influences perceived as conflicting with religious values. These dual expectations position teachers within a highly complex pedagogical environment where they must constantly negotiate between openness and protection, globalization and localization, as well as intercultural competence and moral regulation. This finding suggests that integrating Islamic moderation into ELT involves broader questions concerning identity construction, ideological negotiation, and cultural power within global English education. Similar tensions between global English, local cultural identity, teacher cognition, and Islamic educational philosophy have also been highlighted in contemporary discussions on culturally responsive ELT and intercultural pedagogy (Sofi & Jenks, 2025).

The pedagogical strategies described above, including the “Filter and Transform” approach, are consistent with recent studies emphasizing that religious moderation education should be implemented through contextual, reflective, participatory, and value-oriented pedagogical approaches rather than merely theoretical instruction (Prasetyo et al., 2025). Likewise, integrating Islamic values into English instruction requires systematic curriculum development, culturally relevant teaching resources, and pedagogical flexibility that enables teachers to balance global communicative competence with local ethical commitments (Astuti et al., 2024). Taken together, these findings suggest that successful implementation cannot rely solely on individual teacher initiatives but requires collaborative support involving curriculum developers, educational institutions, teacher-training programs, and policymakers.

Overall, this study contributes theoretically to discussions concerning intercultural pedagogy, teacher cognition, culturally responsive teaching, and religious moderation in language education. The findings indicate that integrating Islamic moderation into ELT should not be understood merely as the addition of Islamic content into English learning materials. Rather, it represents a continuous process of intercultural negotiation, ethical reflection, identity construction, and contextual pedagogical adaptation. Teachers continuously reconstructed English learning into a negotiated educational space where students could critically engage with global communication while maintaining local religious and moral values. In this sense, Islamic moderation may be understood as a culturally responsive and ethically grounded pedagogical framework that prepares students not to reject global culture but to engage with it critically, responsibly, and reflectively. This conceptualization extends existing scholarship on teacher cognition, reflective practice, Islamic education, and religious moderation by demonstrating that value integration in ELT is fundamentally a process of negotiating language, culture, identity, and ethics within increasingly globalized educational environments (Madkur, 2025).

CONCLUSION

This study shows that the integration of Islamic moderation values into ELT extends beyond the inclusion of religious content in classroom instruction. Rather, it represents a continuous process of pedagogical negotiation through which teachers attempt to balance global English learning with Islamic ethical principles and local cultural identities. The findings reveal that teachers positioned themselves not only as language instructors but also as cultural mediators who selectively adapted, contextualized, and critically interpreted English learning materials to maintain students’ moral and religious awareness while promoting intercultural understanding.

The study further emphasizes that Islamic moderation in ELT is closely associated with reflective teaching practices, ethical decision-making, and intercultural sensitivity. Teachers continuously reflected on how English learning could remain communicative, globally oriented, and culturally appropriate within Islamic educational settings. Through strategies such as filtering, contextualizing, and transforming culturally sensitive materials, participants attempted to create a balanced learning environment that encourages openness to global perspectives

without neglecting Islamic values. These findings contribute to broader discussions on culturally responsive pedagogy, teacher cognition, and intercultural communication in language education by demonstrating how religious moderation can function as an ethical and pedagogical framework in ELT contexts.

Despite its contributions, this study is limited to a relatively small number of participants within Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia. Therefore, future research may explore students' perspectives, classroom interactional practices, or comparative studies across different educational and sociocultural contexts to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between English language learning, intercultural competence, and religious moderation. Practically, the study suggests the importance of curriculum development, contextualized teaching materials, and professional training programs that support teachers in integrating Islamic moderation values into English language teaching practices in increasingly globalized educational environments.

REFERENCES

- Alanazi, T. S. (2024). From the classroom to the global stage: Enhancing Saudi EFL pedagogy through the lens of sociocultural theory. *ISRG Journal of Education, Humanities and Literature*. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.14281541>
- Alfian, A., Yusuf, M., & Nafiah, U. (2021). Integrating Islamic values in teaching English: Lessons learned from an integrated Islamic school. *Elsya: Journal of English Language Studies*. <https://doi.org/10.31849/elsya.v4i1.7322>
- Al-Seghayer, K. (2023). The newfound status of English in 21st-century Saudi Arabia. *International Journal of Linguistics*, 15(4), 82–103. <https://doi.org/10.5296/ijl.v15i4.21262>
- Arfa-Kaboodvand, M., & Akbarova, S. (2025). Stakeholders' perspectives on teaching English as a global language. *Studies in Educational Management*. <https://doi.org/10.32038/sem.2025.17.04>
- Arshad, A., Shah, S. K., & Ahmad, M. (2020). Investigating cultural contents in English language teaching materials through textbook evaluation. *Journal of Language and Cultural Education*, 8(2), 127–145. <https://doi.org/10.2478/jolace-2020-0017>
- Astuti, R., Mustofa, M. L., & Nisak, N. M. (2024). Integration of Islamic values into English language teaching in the digital era: Challenges and perspectives. *Halaqa: Islamic Education Journal*, 8(1), 26–34. <https://doi.org/10.21070/halaqa.v8i1.1680>

- Asmawi, A. (2022). Notable new navigations of Malaysian English language education. In D. Adams (Ed.), *Education in Malaysia: Developments, reforms and prospects* (pp. 78–100). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003244769-6>
- Bal, N. G. (2025). Intercultural language learning and teaching in the Turkish context. In R'boul, H. (Ed.). (2025). *Teaching and Researching Interculturality in the Middle East and North Africa (1st ed.)*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003595793>
- Çelik, H., & Yazan, B. (2023). Teaching culture through EFL classes in Turkey: A qualitative study of teachers' conceptualizations and pedagogical orientations. *Pedagogies: An International Journal*, 19, 183–201. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1554480X.2023.2197601>
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Curle, S., Ali, H. I. H., Alhassan, A., & Scatolini, S. S. (Eds.). (2022). *English-medium instruction in higher education in the Middle East and North Africa: Policy, research and pedagogy*. Bloomsbury Academic. <https://doi.org/10.5040/9781350238572>
- Farah, R. R., Jarum, J., & Sumarsono, P. (2025). Navigating Western and Islamic cultural values in English education: A narrative case study of teachers at International Islamic Boarding School. *Indonesian Journal of English Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics*, 10(1), 57–72. <https://doi.org/10.21093/ijeltal.v10i1.1850>
- Farrell, T. S. C. (2024). *Reflective practice for early career language teachers*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009423250>
- Haryadi, R. N., & Aminuddin, M. (2023). The role of English in preparing students to face global challenges. *JiIP – Jurnal Ilmiah Ilmu Pendidikan*, 6(11), 9615–9621. <https://doi.org/10.54371/jiip.v6i11.3167>
- Hasibuan, K., Nisa, K., & Eliza, S. (2025). *Designing English course materials with Islamic values in Islamic institutions*. *Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 5(1), 1–7. <https://doi.org/10.52622/joal.v5i1.349>
- Ilyas, H., & Tarmini, W. (2025). Interpreting pedagogical beliefs: English language teaching in Islamic educational institutions. *Englisia: Journal of Language, Education, and Humanities*. <https://doi.org/10.22373/ej.v13i1.32156>
- Kamali, M. H. (2015). *The middle path of moderation in Islam: The Qur'anic principle of Wasatiyyah*. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780190226831.001.0001>

- Madkur, A. (2025). English teachers promoting intercultural awareness in multilingual context of Indonesian pesantren. *Cross-Cultural Education Studies*, 1(1), 49–62. <https://doi.org/10.63385/cces.v1i1.162>
- Masharipova, F. (2025). Fostering reflective practice: A pathway to effective teaching and professional growth. *Pubmedia Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris*. <https://doi.org/10.47134/jpbi.v2i3.1537>
- McIntosh, M. J., & Morse, J. M. (2015). Situating and constructing diversity in semi-structured interviews. *Global Qualitative Nursing Research*, 2. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2333393615597674>
- Megasih, A., & Nurkamto, J. (2025). *Exploring cultural content and EFL teacher localization practices in Bahasa Inggris: Work in Progress*. *English Education*. <https://jurnal.uns.ac.id/englishedu/article/view/105930>
- Miulescu, M. L., & Tacea, A.-F. (2023). The role of reflection in teaching: Perceptions and benefits. *Journal of Educational Sciences & Management*, 13(2), 124–134. <https://doi.org/10.2478/jesm-2023-0022>
- Mubin, M. N., Syafii, A., & Fatahillah, M. (2024). Integrating Wasathiyyatul Islam fi Tarbiyah: A study of Islamic moderation in educational frameworks. *Kontekstualita*. <https://doi.org/10.30631/38.01.65-82>
- Mukhibat, M., Effendi, M., Setyawan, W. H., & Sutoyo, M. (2024). Development and evaluation of religious moderation education curriculum at higher education in Indonesia. *Cogent Education*, 11(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2024.2302308>
- Mulyati, Y. F., & Kultsum, U. (2023). The integration of Islamic and cultural values in English teaching. *IDEAS: Journal on English Language Teaching and Learning, Linguistics and Literature*, 11(1), 703–711. <https://doi.org/10.24256/ideas.v11i1.3942>
- Naeem, M., Ozuem, W., Howell, K., & Ranfagni, S. (2024). A step-by-step process of thematic analysis to develop a conceptual model in qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 22. <https://doi.org/10.1177/16094069231205789>
- Najih, M., Amril, M., & Evadewi. (2024). Integration of religious knowledge with general science to face the era of globalization at the Hidayatul Mubtadi'ien Islamic Boarding School. *Quality: Journal of Education, Arabic and Islamic Studies*, 2(3), 226–236. <https://doi.org/10.58355/qwt.v2i3.67>
- Natasya, A., & Kembaren, F. R. W. (2025). Teachers' challenges and strategies in adapting English materials for multicultural students. *Celtic: A Journal of*

Culture, English Language Teaching, Literature and Linguistics, 12(1), 308–322. <https://doi.org/10.22219/celtic.v12i1.40701>

Prasetyo, G., Fauziah, Y. R., & Syafii, A. (2025). From policy to pedagogy: Religious moderation as a counter-radicalization strategy in Islamic education—A systematic literature review. *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*. <https://doi.org/10.14421/jpi.2025.142.233-251>

Selim, A. B., Sumaya, S., & Chowdhury, Z. F. (2025). Teaching English while preserving Islamic tradition: A balanced educational approach. *Journal of Applied and Action Research in Islamic Education*, 1(1), 59–72. <https://doi.org/10.70771/jaarie.v1i1a4>

Setiawan, M. H., & Maryam, S. (2024). Integration of religious moderation values in Islamic education curriculum: A comparative literature study. *Samarinda International Journal of Islamic Studies (SIJIS)*, 1(2), 79–87. <https://doi.org/10.64093/sijis.v1i2.595>

Shenbagam, K. (2024). Mastering the global tongue: Communication in a connected world. *GRT Journal of Education, Science and Technology*, 2(2), 82–85. <https://doi.org/10.26452/grtjest.v2i2.48>

Sofi, M. J., & Jenks, C. J. (2025). EFL learning, religious faith and globalization in Indonesia's pesantren. *World Englishes*, 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.1111/weng.70005>

Subchi, I., Zulkifli, Z., Latifa, R., & Sa'diyah, S. (2022). Religious moderation in Indonesian Muslims. *Religions*, 13(5), 451. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13050451>

Toledo-Sandoval, F. (2020). Local culture and locally produced ELT textbooks: How do teachers bridge the gap? *System*, 95, 102362. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2020.102362>

Truong, K. D., Cong-Lem, N., & Li, B. (2025). The interplay of language teachers' identity, cognition, emotion, and agency, and the role of context: A scoping review. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 158, 104967. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2025.104967>

Umar, U., Taufiqi, M. A., & Purwanto, M. B. (2024). Promoting religious moderation through English language teaching: Strategies and challenges in Islamic educational settings. *ETERNAL: English Teaching Journal*, 15(2), 192–202. <https://doi.org/10.26877/eternal.v15i2.443>

Yahaya, N., & Wong, J. W. (2024). The use of CEFR in English language education reform: Foreign textbooks and cultural issues. *Quantum Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 5(SI1), 1–29. <https://doi.org/10.55197/qjssh.v5iSI1.562>

- Yenuri, A. A. (2025). Integrating moral and language education: A holistic approach to character formation in multicultural classrooms. *JALIE: Journal of Applied Linguistics and Islamic Education*, 9(2), 389–406. <https://doi.org/10.33754/jalie.v9i2.1726>
- Zeng, J., & Yang, J. (2024). English language hegemony: Retrospect and prospect. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, 11(1), Article 317. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-024-02821-z>